

The Secondary Agenda

21st Century Learning for Every Student

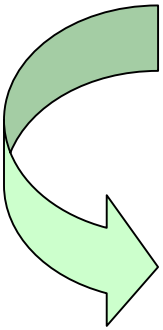
Background

The Kentucky Board of Education adopted an ambitious agenda in August 2004 for improving educational outcomes for high school graduates. Since that time, state policy has evolved to set goals for increased expectations, provide incentives and increased flexibility for changing the structure of schools to improve instruction, and to introduce new supports for schools engaged in this work. In response to state policy and local leadership, school systems are moving to improve educational programs and services and are in various stages of transition to new models of secondary education. These systems are joined together in the Kentucky Secondary Schools Alliance to share expertise and mobilize capacity.

The extent to which the changes underway in these systems will result in improved outcomes for students depends upon many factors but three seem to be critically important: the district's role and the school's capacity to change in response to state policy; the value the local community places on education and their engagement with the students and the school system in change; and, the degree to which teachers and administrators embrace the beliefs of the reform and work together in new ways to impact student achievement.

Through regional summits lead by the Department and student groups organized locally, Kentucky's middle and high school students have an important voice in the dialogue about how to make the secondary experience a more meaningful one for every young person. Students can be very articulate about the kind of schools they need and they can be very astute about the impact of both good and bad practice on themselves and their peers. Students tell us that each one needs to have a strong sense of connection to the school and to be challenged and experience success.

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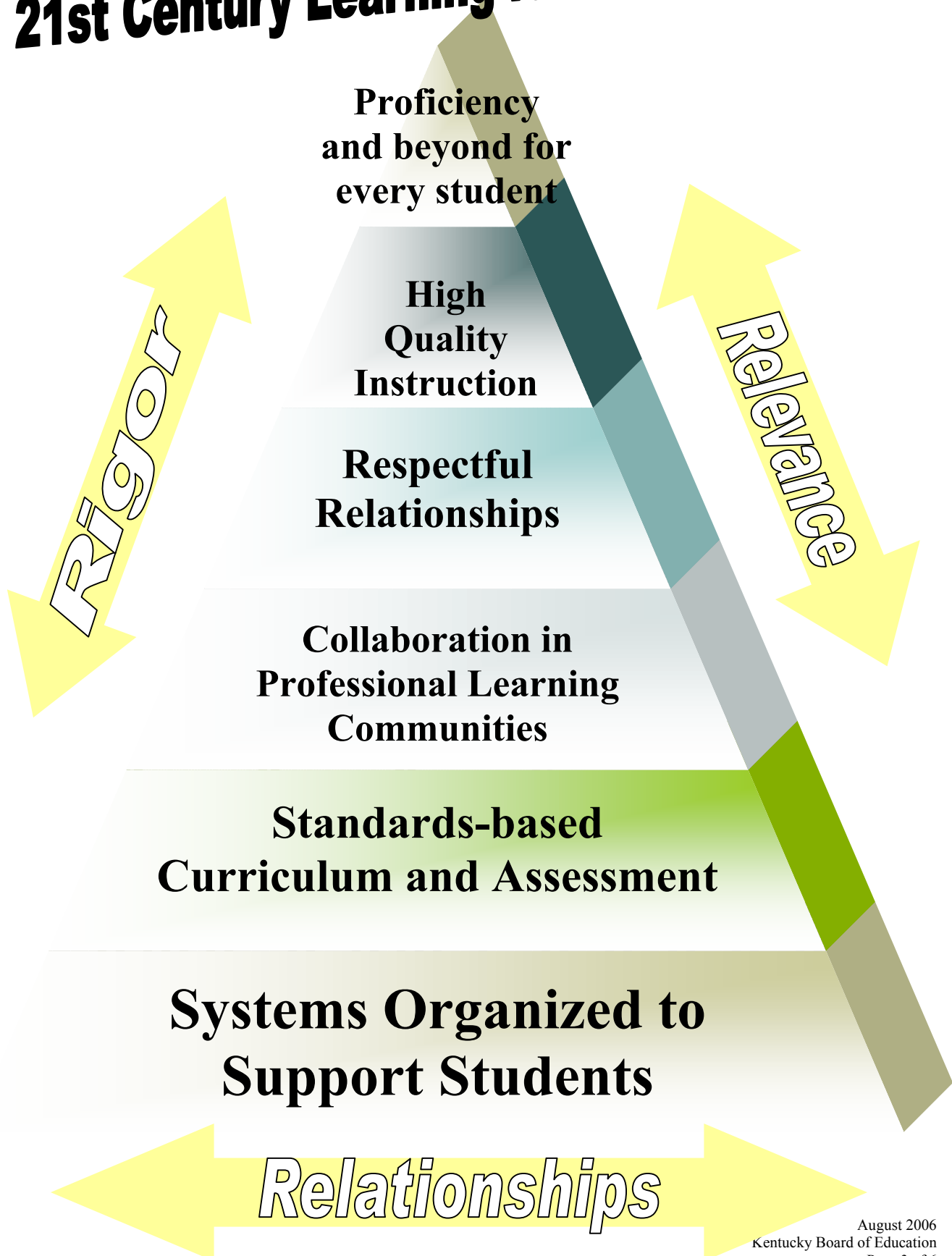


The Goal: By 2014, every Kentucky student will persist to high school graduation and transition to further learning supported by a culture of high expectations and a plan of intentional focus that leads to success in learning, work and citizenship.

In order to achieve this goal, we believe that these essential principles must be present and sustained:

- Every student is actively engaged in high quality, real world learning.
- Every school creates personalized learning environments that provide students with support from adults towards the attainment of Individual Learning Plan goals.
- Every educator collaborates in professional learning communities to increase internal capacity to provide high quality instruction and engaging learning experiences for every student.
- Every student completes a standards-based curriculum that includes educational opportunities outside of the traditional high school experience as preparation for their postsecondary life.
- Every leader organizes systems in response to student needs.

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Kentucky's Essential Principles

Every student is actively engaged in high quality, real world learning

- Every student completes a challenging curriculum including mastery of the core and courses related to areas of individual areas of academic and career focus
- Every student is involved in lessons and activities designed to stretch their learning
- Every student has true ownership in and responsibility for their learning
- Every student is actively engaged in work involving higher level thinking skills
- Every student experiences embedded inquiry-based learning in all disciplines
- Every student experiences high quality learning outside of the traditional classroom setting
- Instructional practice includes real world learning experiences for every student
- Technology is an integral element of instruction and student work products

Every school creates personalized learning environments providing students with support from adults for the attainment of Individual Learning Plan goals.

- Every school has in place an advising and guidance process responsive to the developmental needs of their student population
- Every student has at least one adult in the building who knows them well, knows their learning plan, and will advocate for the student
- Every student's developmental needs are reflected in the advising and guidance process and embodied in their Individual Learning Plan
- Every student's Individual Learning Plan reflects a course of study and extracurricular experiences directly aligned to his/her academic and career goals
- Every student moves through the curriculum at their own pace, based on mastery of skills and knowledge
- Every student's Individual Learning Plan is the basis for successful transition to next levels of learning and work
- Every student has meaningful connections to the school community
- Individual Learning Plans include opportunities for students to lead, educate, and support one another

Appendix B Refocusing Secondary Education (Update)

Every educator collaborates in professional learning communities to increase internal capacity to provide high quality instruction and engaging learning experiences for every student.

- Educators engage in diverse and wide-ranging communities of practice to build internal to impact student learning
- The teaching culture is one of continuous improvement, high accountability and high expectations for all—students and teachers
- Educators are focused on student achievement and the system is held accountable for high quality instruction and assessment
- Teaching talent is deliberately matched with student learning needs
- Teachers and teacher leaders function through teams and are results driven
- Teachers assume a leadership role in designing ongoing professional development experiences that will result in aligned instructional systems, rigorous instruction and rigorous assessment of student progress
- Teachers engage students in learning experiences based on inquiry, real-world application, problem solving and critical thinking designed to stretch their learning to the greatest extent
- Literacy is embedded throughout instruction and across disciplines
- Middle and high school staff work together to bridge academic, social and programmatic transitions between the grades
- Secondary and postsecondary education work together to bridge academic, social and programmatic transitions for graduates

Every student completes a standards-based curriculum rich in inquiry-based learning and educational opportunities outside of traditional high school experiences in preparation for their postsecondary life.

- Courses and curriculum are aligned grades 6-12 both vertically and horizontally to ensure readiness for college and the workforce
- Depth of knowledge provides a framework for curriculum development, delivery of content and assessments
- An integrated curriculum is aligned with academic and occupational standards
- Career and technical curriculum and subsequent courses are based on national and/or state industry standards
- Traditional and nontraditional learning experiences are standards-based
- Schools ensure the capacity exists to deliver nontraditional expanded learning opportunities to every student including experiences such as Senior Projects, Internships, Co-Operative education, and/or online learning.
- All students have access to credit-based transition opportunities such as dual credit, articulation credit, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate
- Decisions are data driven; data are used to benchmark and track progress across educational levels and institutions, especially about transitions into and out of high school

Appendix B

Refocusing Secondary Education (Update)

All leaders are organizing systems in response to student needs.

- A student's academic, social, personal and career development is facilitated through a comprehensive advising and guidance process
- Leaders formalize structures for communicating, building teaching capacity and intervening in instructional practice around the needs of students
- Leaders engage in a reallocation of existing resources, including personnel and finances, to address areas of highest need
- Local business/industry, community and postsecondary partners are called upon to design and implement change based on data and results
- State, district and school policies are examined and revised to incent and facilitate needed change
- There is a coherent framework for school improvement that is well organized around specific goals and priorities
- The use of time is examined carefully; master schedules are structured to allow for extended and/or flexible instructional time and to accommodate nationally recognized practices of looping, advising, instructional teaming of teachers, common planning time, and mentoring
- Leadership monitors key indicators continually and acts to mitigate factors that do not stretch learning or that place students at risk of failure

The Next Phase of Work - Building 21st Century Schools

The purpose of this Secondary Agenda is to provide a clearer articulation of the goals of state policy, a coherent framework for state and local action, and a means to set goals and assess progress against the specific agenda for improving achievement. The Secondary Agenda has four major components:

- [Essential Principles](#)
- [Benchmarks and Indicators](#)
- [Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [District and School Action Plans](#)

With the release of The Secondary Agenda, the Department is issuing a Call to Action: 21st Century Schools. The Call to Action will form the basis of a compact between the local systems and the Department and will represent the next phase of the Secondary Schools Alliance work. 21st Century Schools is a broad term that embraces substantial transformations of traditional middle and high school systems already underway, such as implementation of schools within schools that engage at risk students, schools of study that provide a new educational experience for all students, and other models emerging across the state, such as merged middle and high school systems and middle and early colleges. Regardless, the intent of this framework is to incent and support fundamental systemic change that will impact every student, with particular emphasis on students who are not well served by the current system. The purpose of high school has changed and our system of schools must come into alignment with these new expectations so that Kentucky's young people will be ready.